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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000146

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/FO, AND NEA/IPA

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TAGS: PREL PTER KPAL KWBG EAID EFIN AE

SUBJECT: UAE LEADERSHIP ON THE MEETINGS OF THE MODERATES

REFS: A) ABU DHABI 142, B) ABU DHABI 133

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah continues his coordination with Arab counterparts, while MinState Gargash recounted that February 3 discussions among the moderate camp addressed troublesome scenarios like a Palestinian split that gives a new Israeli government the excuse that it "has no partner" for peace, or continued Iranian or Hamas presence at Doha meetings. The UAE likes the idea of an Arab meeting in late February with the Secretary, he stated. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed relates the story of UAE's non-participation in the last Doha summit due to Iran's presence. UAE Foreign Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayid has been traveling to Qatar and Oman in an effort to heal the split within the GCC. End summary.

¶2. (C) Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Anwar Gargash told the Ambassador February 9 that the February 3 meeting of moderate Arabs in Abu Dhabi had discussed two troublesome scenarios (apparently defining the problem more than identifying solutions). The scenarios were:

--- Palestinian infighting continues, and an incoming Israeli government (led by Benjamin Netanyahu, for example) simply claims that "it wants peace but has no Palestinian partner" to negotiate with. This concern led to a discussion of Palestinian reconciliation, during which the Palestinian Authority (PA) made the point that it was prepared to be inclusive, but that Hamas was not prepared to accept its obligations.

--- Concerns that Qatar will invite Ahmad-Najad and Khalid Meshal to the "Arab League" Summit in Doha at the end of March. This was discussed as a real possibility which creates for the UAEG a concern that Iran is becoming a permanent guest at Arab League meetings. The moderate ministers wanted a commitment from Qatar that Iran will not be invited; also, if Khalid Meshal is in the room, the moderates "will walk out."

¶3. (C) The ministers also continued their discussion of the previous evening (ref b) on messaging, agreeing that the moderates have a good story to tell and should be more proactive in claiming the media spotlight from the more extreme forces. The moderates also seek inclusion, welcoming "radicals" coming over to their side and eschewing polarization.

¶4. (C) Sheikh Abdullah's meetings this week (ref A), particularly to Oman and Qatar, are designed to spread this moderate message. He will also see the Lebanese Foreign Minister in Abu Dhabi and plans a visit to Riyadh February 11. The moderate camp seeks greater Arab cohesion in preparation for key upcoming events:

-- 22 February meeting of Palestinian factions in Cairo,
-- 2 March donors conference in Cairo,
-- 3 March Arab foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo, and
-- end of March Arab Summit in Doha.

Dr. Gargash concluded his conversation with the Ambassador by saying the UAEG liked the idea apparently being bandied about in Washington of a meeting at the end of February in Washington with the Secretary, Special Envoy Mitchell, and moderate Arabs (presumably on the margins of the Kennedy Center's "Arabesque" cultural event).

¶15. (C) Separately, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed (MbZ), commented to the Ambassador on the Arab League split associated with Gaza. He said the UAE had not gone to Doha in spite of urgent calls (from Sheikh Tamim) at 03:00 in the morning of the summit, with Tamim saying the Qataris wanted the UAE to be there and hoped for a positive reply. MbZ said he would check with President Khalifa, which he did around 10:00 that morning (keeping the UAE delegation on standby). Khalifa's judgment was that if the Iranians were present the UAE would not be; in the end the UAE delegation did not go. (MbZ did not explain how they arrived at the conclusion that the Iranians would be there, and the Qataris later claimed that Iran was not set to join "until the UAE didn't come.") Sheikh Tamim called MbZ that evening to complain about UAE non-attendance; MbZ was again clear in stating that if Iranians are there the UAE won't be. He did not believe the Qatari line about Iran's participation, and confirmed that AbZ was traveling to Qatar with a very clear message on Iran and the Arab League.

OLSON